Plot Templates

The most simplistic plot template

Adventure comes to you. A Stranger comes to town.

You go to Adventure. You leave town.

**A more complex approach to plot templates: Ronald B. Tobias discusses** [**20 Master Plots**](http://www.amazon.com/20-Master-Plots-Build-Them/dp/1582972397/ref=nosim?tag=darpatsrevnot-20)**:**

1. **Quest.** Character oriented story, the protagonist searches for something and winds up changing him/herself.
2. **Adventure.** Plot oriented, this features a goal-oriented series of events.
3. **Pursuit.** This is the typical Chase Plot. Definitely action-oriented.
4. **Rescue.** Another easy to recognize action-oriented plot.
5. **Escape.** A variation on the Rescue is when the protagonist escapes on his/her own.
6. **Revenge.** Ah, character comes back in with this one. Someone is wronged and vows to take revenge.
7. **The Riddle.** Love a good mystery? This is the plot for you.
8. **Rivalry.** Character oriented, this story follows two main characters, one on a downward track and one on an upward track and their interactions.
9. **Underdog.** Everyone is the US roots for the Underdog. This is the plot where the under-privileged (handicapped, poor, etc) triumphs despite overwhelming odds.
10. **Temptation.** Pandora’s Box extended to novel form.
11. **Metamorphosis.** This is a physical transformation of some kind. If you recently watched the movie, “District 9″, you’ll recognize this plot form. It’s Dracula, Beauty and the Beast, or the one I remember best is The Fly.
12. **Transformation.** Similar to the previous, this plot features an inner change, instead of changing the outer form.
13. **Maturation.** *Bildungsroman*, rite of passage, coming-of-age–these terms all refer to someone growing up morally, spiritually or emotionally. Often, it’s just a hint of growth, or a tiny change that hints at larger changes.
14. **Love.** The classic Boy-meets-Girl plot.
15. **Forbidden Love.** Oh, hasn’t Stephenie Meyer milked this one in her *Twilight* series? Brilliant use of the forces that keep her characters apart, while still attracting.
16. **Sacrifice.** From the Biblical tale of Jesus to the story of parents sacrificing for their children, this is a staple of literature.
17. **Discovery.** You know those secrets you’ve buried deep in your past? This story digs around, exposes secrets and watches them affect the characters.
18. **Wretched Excess.** When a character is in a downward spiral from alcohol, drugs, greed, etc. this is the plot form.
19. **Ascension or Descension.** A rise or fall from power puts a character into this plot form.

**Hero’s Journey: Adapted from Joseph Campbell’s Mythic Hero**

1. [Christopher Vogler’s explanation of the Hero’s Journey](http://www.amazon.com/Writers-Journey-Mythic-Structure-3rd/dp/193290736X/ref=nosim?tag=darpatsrevnot-20) is excellent. The basic stages, along with the corresponding character arc are these:
   * Ordinary World – Limited awareness of problem
   * Call to Adventure – increased awareness
   * Refusal of Call – reluctance to change
   * Meeting the Mentor – overcoming reluctance
   * Crossing the First Threshold – committing to change
   * Tests, Allies, Enemies – experimenting with 1st change
   * Approach to the Inmost Cave- preparing for big change
   * Supreme Ordeal – attempting big change
   * Reward – consequences of the attempt
   * The Road Back – rededication to change
   * Resurrection – final attempt at big change
   * Return with Elixir – final mastery of the problem

The Hero’s Journey

Unusual birth- Oftentimes there are unusual circumstances surrounding the birth of a hero. The hero is frequently born to royalty or has a god or goddess as one of his or her parents. The hero is sometimes in danger at birth and needs to be hidden or disguised.

A Call To Adventure- Heroes can begin their journeys in a number of different ways, but usually a traumatic event occurs that leads to the hero wanting or needing to leave home. When the a hero is called to leave home, he or she may refuse to leave at first, only to be convinced, tricked, or forced into leaving later.

Supernatural helper- The hero is usually aided by someone, often old and wise, with magical and mystical power. This figure serves as a guide and mentor as the hero embarks into a new world and faces challenges to his or her life and character.

Talisman or special weapon- The hero often has a weapon or protective device given to him or her that will be useful on the journey. The supernatural helper may be the one to give the hero the weapon or to tell him or her about it.

Crossing the threshold- At some point, the hero leaves the familiar, safe world of childhood and home and enters fully into the new world of the journey.

Trials- The hero has to succeed at a series of trials that challenge and build his or her moral strength and character. Typically, one of these trials involves a descent into the underworld where the hero may experience a wound that cannot be healed.

Achievement of a goal- Upon successful completion of the trials, the hero achieves the ultimate goal of the journey. The goal may be an object, such as the Holy Grail; a conceptual task, such as the destruction of the Empire and Death Star; or knowledge or a state of being as in the story of Buddha.

Reconciliation with father-or mother- figure-If a division or conflict with the hero's father or father-figure is part of the hero's journey, reconciliation or healing with the father occurs as part of the hero's journey.

Return home- The hero, sometimes willingly and sometimes unwillingly, again crosses the threshold and returns home. He or she brings new wisdom and important cultural values back to the community upon return.